

Transcript.

Remarks V. Pres. Humphrey.

Building and Construction Trades
Conference

March 24, 1966.

CHAIRMAN BONADIO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your very informative and hard-hitting speech.

(Standing ovation.)

Ladies and gentlemen, the Vice President of the United States of America, Hubert Humphrey.

(Standing ovation.)

VICE PRESIDENT HUMPHREY: Thank you very much, Frank. My good friends of the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, my welcoming committee and these wonderful friends who are from Minnesota, that again make this one of the outstanding meetings that ever comes to Washington, adding dignity and snow to this gathering.

(Laughter.)

Mr. Speaker, I was listening here in the sidelines to your remarks and when I came in and saw that you had that badge on from the Massachusetts Building and Construction Trades, I want to say right now that George Meany was right when he said we Democrats need the Labor movement, and I want to say also, we Democrats need Speaker McCormack all the time.

(Applause.)

I have a few items that I want to report to you before I launch off into some of the remarks that I hope to say this morning.

First of all, I wish to mention that I am in good standing, my dues paid up through June of Local Union No. 130, Chicago Journeyman Plumbers; Stephen Bailey gave me my card just as I came in.

(Applause.)

And I am going to have a word with Willard Wirtz about my income, too, on this matter.

(Laughter.)

Secondly, I noticed with great interest that you have had a splendid program of speakers, that you have discussed the health and welfare of the Nation. You have discussed some of the great achievements of the Government of our country and this economy, and you have even on occasion had a word to say about some of the shortcomings and the limitations and failures of those of us that have some responsibility in this Government.

I thought I wouldn't spend much time on the failures today.

(Laughter.)

I thought it might be better if I just sort of overlooked that, and I am not even going to be much of a prophet. I have been making some prophecies of late, and they haven't come true.

I prophesized that the Twins would win the World Series, but I know now why I didn't win.

(Laughter.)

Any pitcher, and two pitchers that want a million dollars a year, if I had known that Drysdale and Koufax were going to pull that price, I wouldn't have prophesized at all.

(Laughter.)

I made a prediction out at the AFL-CIO Convention in San Francisco that the Congress of the United States would repeal 14(b). I guess I made a mistake. The House had good sense. The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Leader, they produced the results, but the trouble was in the Senate.

(Applause.)

They have two rules in the Senate that really denied you this great victory. One rule is Rule 22, which permits the filibuster. The other rule is they won't let the VicePresident speak.

(Applause.)

The changes of those rules would have produced victory, but I am not going to be too lighthearted about our failure in this matter, the repeal of a very unjust section of law, because it was pledged. It was promised to the best of our ability, and, quite frankly, we weren't able to deliver, and I regret it, but I don't know how you feel about these matters.

My public life has been one of many efforts and occasionally a few successes, so as far as I am concerned, despite the fact that the second session of the 89th Congress did not succeed in this endeavor, I do believe that the people of the United States and their duly elected representatives recognize that this section of law violates a long-established pattern of jurisdiction of the Federal Government in matters of interstate commerce, and that we will not fail in the long run. Some way, some how, the Congress of the United States and the Senate in particular will find the ways and the means to adjust and remove this inequity. At least, this should be our commitment, and as far as I am concerned I have made my stand.

(Applause.)

I don't waiver on those stands and I am going to do all that I can to try to match the high standards of the House of Representatives.

(Applause.)

Now, may I just say this word. Many of our young friends in the House, as I am sure the Speaker has mentioned to you, took their stand. They stood up and were counted, as we say, and I want to recall to you the opening session of your Conference, where the distinguished President of the AFL-CIO addressed you forthrightly, honestly and effectively.

He said that the AFL-CIO was not the captive, so to speak, of either political party. He said that there had been some disappointments. He also went on to say they had an awful lot of friends in the Democratic Party, and he is right, but then he made this statement. They were going to return to the principle of political action of that beloved Labor leader, and statesman, the great American, Samuel Gompers, to punish your enemies and reward your friends.

Well, don't you forget it. Don't you forget it. I will buy that any day.

(Applause.)

You have an awful lot of young friends, first-term Congressmen, that stood up and were counted when the going was rough, when the pressure was on, and I appeal to every leader in the Trade Union movement, you men that represent the very heart and the core and the bulwark and strength of the Labor movement, I ask you to remember your friends. I ask you to go on out and give these young men that helped you when the vote was needed. I ask you to go out and give them unstinted wholehearted support through your great programs of political action, which reminds me that, lest I forget it, as a man who has enjoyed the generosity and the helpfulness of the Labor movement, and I am very mindful of it, and most appreciate of it, and highly honored by it, I want to pay my respects and my thanks to the leaders of your great program of political education, to every person in every Local, in every central body, in every state committee, and all of the state organizations, and in this great Department of the Building and Construction Trades. I want to pay my respects to AFL-CIO COPE, to Al Mark, to Roy Reuther and to all the others that have done the job all over America for progressive government, humanitarian government, and for the programs that have benefitted the American

We are not going to let you down, and you haven't let us down, because we are working on the same wave length and we have the same objectives, a better America, a better America.

I addressed you on that subject here two years ago.

Better education for America; better health for America; better schools for America; better trained people for America -- just a better country -- better housing, better cities, better and finer use of our resources.

And I have looked over the legislative program of this Department of the Building and Construction Trades. I am fully mindful of the many resolutions that have been passed by the AFL-CIO in your general conventions, and I am well aware of the keen interest that this part of the Labor Movement has, the Building Trades has in the overall legislative needs of our country, the overall economic and social needs of our country.

And let the word go from this place -- as has been said before -- that the American Labor Movement has not asked for special privilege. American Labor Movement has asked for the opportunity of working men and women in this Nation to live a better life, to enjoy more of the fruits of life, to enjoy a higher standard of living, to be able to educate their children, to be able to make their full contribution to the strength of this nation. And I think it can be said without fear of contradiction that most of the great

humanitarian legislative gains that have helped strengthen this country would never have been passed had it not have been for the active political support and the dedication of the rank and file membership and the leadership of the American Labor Movement, and this particular group of men in this audience.

(Applause.)

Now, I am not going to review all the programs before us. You have had speakers that have done so, but I know of your deep concern about the situs picketing legislation. I haven't -- I didn't hear what the Speaker had to say about it. I know of your deep concern about the minimum wage legislation, unemployment insurance and Federal standards for unemployment insurance, and the improvement of our U.S. Employment Service. These are items of legislation that are not going to make or break the Labor Movement or make or break America, but they are all fair and just, and every one of them ought to be passed -- and every one of them can be passed. Every one of them deserves passage.

And the only way we are going to get it done is to buckle down to the task and see that it is done, and I have a feeling that in the instance particularly

of situs picketing, that that legislation -- which, by the way, I co-sponsored in the Senate -- I apparently wasn't very effective, because I wasn't able to get it passed, but we didn't have the number of votes we have in the 89th Congress, that if we can get the cooperation that we ought to have, not only from the Labor Movement, with Congress, but amongst us in Congress, and if the word is known that you really mean it -- and you do -- that you are going to remember your friends and are not going to forget your enemies, either.

I have a feeling that there will be a great spiritual revival amongst the brethren.

(Applause.)

Now, I want to talk to you this morning about some matters that are of concern to us as citizens.

We are Labor members; we are Democrats or Republicans; we belong to a particular religious faith or denomination, but above all, we are Americans, and above all, we are free people.

Free people, Americans, heads of household, family members, with our deep responsibilities to family and home and church, and Trade Union, and then we have our political affiliations.

I think that is just about the way the sequence of priority goes; a free man, an American, a citizen, a head of a family, proud of family, proud of religious faith, proud of his union affiliation or whatever affiliation he may have, and then a member of a political party to try to exercise some influence and some sense of direction in the political life of this nation.

But citizen first and partisan second. I happen

to have a little prejudice about a political party, and I have never spared anyone the pain of hearing it. I believe in the right of advocacy and I don't believe that you strengthen a political party by running it down, and I don't believe that you strengthen Labor movement by just telling of its limitations. You can rest assured that the opposition will tell about your failures, and you can rest assured that your enemies will tell about your shortcomings, and I have a feeling that there are enough people in America that will tell you about the mistakes that the Democratic Party has made, so I want to go on record right now that I am mighty proud to be a member of the Democratic Party and proud to be the Vice President of the United States, and very proud and grateful to have the opportunity to work for the people of the United States, because that is my job, to be a worker in the vineyards of democracy.

My only goal is to do a good job. Very frankly, those of you in this audience who have known me for many years know that it has been a long, long struggle in public life, and you also know that I have

been richly rewarded by your help, by the votes of my constituents in my home state of Minnesota, and, finally, when I have got on the right team, to be rewarded by the vast majority of votes by the people of the United States.

To be Vice President of this Nation is a sobering responsibility and a high honor. I hope that I may always be worthy of that honor. I hope that I may be able to contribute something to the dignity and the importance of this office. I hope that I may help to make this office a meaningful instrument for public good. I hope that I may always be able to work within the confines of the Office of the Vice Presidency to strengthen my country, to make it a better place for this generation and generations yet unborn.

(Applause.)

That is my only political ambition.

(Applause.)

Now, much is said about our country these days. We have people at home and abroad that analyze American Government policy and the American nation itself, day after day. And may I make it crystal clear

before I say one more sentence, the precious right of debate and free speech and of assembly and petition is one that we will guard unto death. It is a sacred right in a free society. Who knows it better than the Labor movement itself?

Yes, the right to picket, the right to speak, the right of dissent, the right to be different, these rights are at the very heart and core of the whole democratic structure of society. They are at the very center of what we call the democratic philosophy.

Also, the right to advocate, to propose, to initiate, to begin is at the heart of free government and democratic institutions. Whatever we do should be directed towards the enrichment and the advancement of humankind. Whatever we do, whatever decision we make, or decisions we make, should be directed towards the advancement of human freedom and of free institutions.

And sometimes I am of the opinion that those of us that call ourselves free men, that call ourselves the free people have a feeling that all you need to do for freedom is just say that you are free -- while the enemy, the Communist says he wants to conquer the

world, and he plies his trade, he engages in propaganda, he indulges in subversion, he seeks to penetrate in established organizations and movements. He is on the go. He is militant. He is aggressive. He is determined. And, ladies and gentlemen, when you have an enemy like that, you cannot sustain your side of the argument or the cause; you cannot advance your cause or your position if all you do is respect the right of the opposition and do nothing about advancing the cause in which you have belief, and to which you are dedicated.

So, the Vice President of the United States says that, as free people and a free nation, we have a message for the world, and we have a message for ourselves; our message is that we believe that people can do better for themselves through duly elected representatives of the people, through their own democratic institutions, through their own free trade movement, through their farm cooperatives, through their individual ownership, through their privately owned businesses.

We believe that our economic and political system offers more to mankind than any other system on the face of the earth, and I believe we ought to advocate it.

And not only should we advocate it, but we should defend it. And we have learned some painful lessons in the past 25 years.

This movement that I look at right now, you, the representatives of the Trade Union Movement, you were the first to understand the banners of Fascism and Nazism, and the kind of aggression that took place some years past in Europe. Let it ever be on the records that long before many others who claimed to have such insight into world problems could see the menace of Hitler and Stalin, the American Federation of Labor in those days, and elements in the CIO and in the United Mine Workers and the Teamsters and others, these men did see the danger of aggression, the danger of infiltration, the danger of subversion, the danger of Communists and Fascists aggression, and you stood up in your conventions and you resolutely, you understood it and you called upon the American people to awaken.

You were right. Others were slow -- some of them late, and regretably, some wrong. But those are the yesterdays. Now, once again, indeed on the continuing basis, the same struggle is with us.

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You were right. Others were slow -- some of them late, and regretably, some wrong. But those are the yesterdays. Now, once again, indeed on the continuing basis, the same struggle is with us.

There has really been no peace for many a year. Since World War II this nation has sacrificed 168,000 casualties on the field of battle. Not one of them for our selfish nationalistic purpose, because we have none. Not one of them sacrificed on the field of battle because we aggressed against someone else, or because we sought somebody else's territory, or that we sought to dominate somebody else's country. Not one.

But every one of the 168,000 casualties since World War II have been given for the defense of others, and for the defense of a principle -- the principle namely that aggression shall not be an accepted pattern of international conduct for the achievement of national objectives or political power, and we are a nation that is determined to see to it that this world of ours be a world of law and order, rather than a world of the jungle and of the despot and of the aggressors. And we have the means, may I say, in collusion with and in cooperation with others to see to it that aggression does not become the patter of international conduct.

(Applause.)

Now, I know that people would like not -- some people would like not to have to face up to these tough alternatives. And may I say that this is not anything new.

Back in the '30's people thought that the Japanese would not in any way be aggressors against us. All they wanted was Manchuria.

And back in the '30's there were those who thought that really Mr. Hitler didn't want much, just Austria and Czechoslovakia. And Neville Chamberlain once said of the Czechoslovakians that it was a country far remote, and a people of which we know little or nothing.

Those were the words of 1939 -- '38, '39, and we have people today -- and I don't mean to draw a complete similarity or a total comparison, but at least it is a frame of reference. We have people today who say Viet Nam is a remote country, far, far away, and a people about which we know little or nothing.

My fellow Americans, Saigon, Viet Nam is as close to the United States today as London was in 1940 by travel, by communication, and closer. In fact, today, to show you the kind of a world we live in, the

very telephonic communications that we have to
Saigon are from a space satellite.

So, it is not so far away and they are not a very strange people, either. They have been here a long time, and if we had had nothing else happen to us in the last few years out of the tragedy and the pain, and the suffering of Southeast Asia and our involvement in that area, and it is painful, it is a suffering and agonizing experience, if nothing else has happened that we can say is worthwhile, I would say that we at least have been brought to a recognition that we need to know more about Asia. We need to wake up, before all the lights are put out, the lights of freedom, and why do I say that?

Because, today, we claim to be the leader of the free peoples, and if we didn't claim it, we are nevertheless, and they know it. Our enemies know it, and so do our friends, but you cannot be leader of the free world and only lead half of it. You cannot be leader of free peoples and only be the leader in the Western Hemisphere, North and South America, and Europe, because, ladies and gentlemen, two-thirds of the population of this world is in Asia, and the Pacific.

To put it in simple form, you cannot be a leader of the world and have a half-world knowledge.

You cannot be the leader of freedom in the world and have only a half knowledge of a full world, and that is where we stand, so we are having to wake up. We are having to learn, and our sons and daughters will have to learn and learn rapidly.

Your universities will have to become more interested in, more concerned about, and more equipped and better equipped to teach about the peoples and the cultures, and the social and economic forces at work in Asia, because there is no escape from it, from what happens there.

There is no way that we can avoid being involved because this is a world of modern technology. This is a world of dynamic forces. This is a changing world, and when I hear people say, as some do, "We ought not to be involved in Asia," this is like saying, you ought not to be involved in the atmosphere," because Asia is part of this globe and it is a big part of it.

There are more people in India than in Africa and South America put together. There are more people in India, Pakistan, than in Africa, South America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand put together.

These are great areas of the world, pitifully poor, struggling for a place in the sun for themselves, none of them wanting to be dominated by the forces of Communism, all of them wanting to be independent and free, and yet every one of them facing unbelievable problems in their economies, and at least most of them recognizing the danger of Asian Communist militancy.

You don't have to speak to the people in India about it. They have been attacked twice in five years, over twenty divisions of their troops on the Chinese frontier, and I don't think you have to speak to the people of Southeast Asia about the militancy and the aggressiveness of Asian Communism.

Communism in Asia, my friends, is not a subject of academic discussion. It is a matter of life and death. It is a matter of survival, and yet even if there were no Communist threat, there would still be grave problems.

There are social forces at work in these areas that are upsetting the old order, and demanding something better for the new day, so there is no way, my fellow Americans, that a free people, a dynamic people like ourselves, with our responsibilities and

our opportunities, can escape involvement nor should we.

For us to fail in our responsibilities of involvement in Asia is to forfeit it to Communism, and I happen to be one that believes that the Lord God blessed this Nation with wealth and power, not for our own selfish indulgence, not for our own luxury, not for our own selfish purposes, but so that we might be able to help others help themselves, so that we might be able to help others defend themselves, so that we might be able to help other people build a better life for themselves.

I believe this is one of the moral responsibilities of this Nation, and we are seeing to it that we keep that responsibility and fulfill it. This is why we are involved. We are not in South Viet Nam because of a piece of geography alone, even though the Southeast Asia is an important piece of geography on the world map, ruled a thousand years by the Chinese mandarins, ruled two generations or more, or a hundred years or more by French Colonialism and a victim of war over 25 years, pummeled, walked over, bombed, every

tragedy that could befall a people has fallen upon the people of South Viet Nam and most of the peoples of Southeast Asia. Is it any wonder that there is instability?

Colonial rule for better than a thousand years, exploitation of the people and the resources, a quarter of a century of war since 1940, occupied by the Japanese, dominated by colonial power, the victim of bombs and shells and terror and fire, and yet I hear some very, very comfortable people of our country and other countries say, "Isn't it awful? They are so unstable. They don't seem to appreciate what we are doing, and they have instability in their government, and they have problems of inflation and terrible economic problems in their economy."

My fellow Americans, the wonder is, the miracle is, that they have any will to resist at all. The miracle is that they have survived, but they have, and the people are industrious and they are brave. Six hundred thousand or more of the South Vietnamese in an army, their rate of casualties and fatalities has been unbelievably high. Since 1958, 61,000, Mr. Speaker, -- 61,000 mayors, leaders of villages, councilmen assassinated in cold blood, and even the young people

who have gone out to the villages to help in the work of health and education cruelly assassinated and removed from their very good work.

This is the pattern, and it was into this that we came, not because we desired a struggle, not because we wanted to test our strength, but because of a commitment under treaty, and a treaty is a solemn obligation, ladies and gentlemen, the supreme law of the land, because of a resolution of the Congress authorizing and directing the President of the United States to take whatever action was necessary to fulfill our commitments under treaties and resolutions, and to protect American Armed Forces and to resist aggression, and to bring peace to the area.

Don't let anybody tell you for a single minute that our action there was a spontaneous action of just a President. Three Presidents, President Eisenhower, President Kennedy and President Johnson have all seen the necessity of our involvement in this area, and I don't think that three Presidents of that caliber are wrong.

The Congress of the United States, every member of that Congress, knows exactly what we have been doing. Every members has had a chance time after time to vote for appropriations or resolutions or authorizations directed towards our activities in that

area, and overwhelmingly -- overwhelmingly the Congress has supported the policies, not because we are happy about it, not because there is not some concern, not because we think this is the way everything ought to be done, but because we have had no better alternative, and because we believe that America does have some responsibilities, not only to ourselves, but to others.

I can't help but ask you a question when I hear people say, as they do, "This is the worst of all prices," they say, "for us to face up to Communist aggression," and I have heard it said so many times. It isn't that those who complain or disagree feel that Communist aggression is not a menace, because many of them do, and have so indicated by word indeed, but I have heard it said, and I am sure very sincerely, that this is the worst of all places to become involved.

We don't have that choice, my friends. We do not pick the places anymore than the Police Department picks the place that they have to meet the bandit or the burglar.

We are the defenders, not the aggressors.

We do not select the scene of battle, but it is not the worst of all places either. For an air nation, a nation of air power and sea power, there are, in fact, some decided advantages of this location, but be that as it may, Berlin is 100 miles within the Communist sea of East Germany, an island in the Communist sea, and every military officer of your Government will tell you that it isn't the best of all places, either, for American Forces to be stationed, but we are there, and the reason that we are there is just one reason; namely, to let those forces of aggression or those forces of militancy that would seek to aggress, to understand that there is an American commitment, and that brute force will not be the rule of conduct in this world, and we are going to keep our commitments to Berlin, as we have, and to Western Europe, as we have, because it is in our interest and because it is in the interest of peace.

I ask this audience this morning, what do you think would happen in this world now if the United States of America were to announce that no longer would we feel obligated to resist the aggressor in any

active aggression if one should take place in Western Europe? What do you think would happen in this world if the shield of defense which this nation gives to Western Europe, to Japan, and to Latin America, were to be taken down, and somebody were to announce that all we are to have is a fortress America?

Well, why, my friends, the waves of tyranny and despotism and violence that would overflow, that would engulf the world, would be beyond human description -- beyond human description.

The greatest protection for peace in the world today is the credibility of American power. The greatest protection and security for peace today is the shield of American strength, wherever it is, and our strength is for but one purpose, peace and freedom. That's all, and you know it, and I want you to tell your people about it when you go home.

(Applause.)

Then, I hear some people say, "Oh, yes, but in other areas we didn't get involved in war," but every decision had within it the possibility.

When John F. Kennedy called up the Reserves in 1961, as he needed to and did, and dispatched another

50,000 troops immediately to Europe, doubled our garrison in Berlin, and notified Mr. Khrushchev that we would not back down, within that decision was the possibility of war, and one of the reasons that there was no war is because Mr. Khrushchev knew we meant it.

When John F. Kennedy faced Khrushchev in Cuba on the missile crisis, war was so close, my friends, that it was frightening, just the thought of it, but we kept our commitment. We took the chance, we made the decision, and the fact that there was no war was something for which we can be prayerfully grateful, but one could have taken place had not Mr. Khrushchev known that we meant it.

Therefore, I say to you, that there must never be a time that the aggressor doesn't understand that we mean to keep our word, either that or we shouldn't make any commitments or any promises. Either we keep them or we quit making them, and the first time that the United States of America refuses to honor its commitments, the first time that this great nation fails in its responsibilities under

the charter of the United Nations, which charter calls upon the member states to suppress aggression, and to seek self determination, and that is what the charter calls for, the first time that we fail in that responsibility, on that day the flood gates of tyranny and aggression and terror will be opened, and there will be a different world, and it won't be one you like, so what we are seeking to do in South Viet Nam is to defend the principle, and, once again, at great pain and sacrifice and sorrow and tears, to demonstrate that aggression, that the price of aggression is too high for the aggressor to pay it, and to prove that we can prevent the success of aggression as a mode of international conduct.

That is all. We are not seeking to occupy North Viet Nam. We seek no conquest, we seek to overthrow no regime, we seek no expansion of the war, and when I hear people say, as I read everyday, that we ought to have peace, I say, "Lord God, yes. That is what we want," and we are prepared to go to the peace table this afternoon. We are prepared to meet any place, any time, anywhere, with anybody that wants to talk about peace, and we are prepared to walk

the extra mile to get it, but we are not prepared to sell out other people, and we are not prepared to turn this world or any part of it over to the forces of tyranny by our action or our failure to act.

We are not prepared, in other words, to retreat -- I repeat, to retreat and appease, and I don't think you want us to do it, do you?

(Applause.)

Now, let me bring you some words of encouragement. You know, I returned from a nine-nation tour in Asia. I have been in Asia three times since December 27th. I talked, as the Speaker knows, to all the leaders of the key governments in that area, and I can say to you that I found very little complaint about our involvement in Southeast Asia. I found none that thought we should withdraw, and I found all that knew that the responsibilities for the continuity of the war rested in Hanoi.

We have walked the road of peace. We continue to walk it. We pursue it, and we will continue to pursue it, but we are also prepared to make the sacrifices that are necessary for peace, and those sacrifices are not all around the conference table. Our first job is to get people to the conference table, but on the military front, when I returned, I said, "I have reason for encouragement and felt a restrained optimism." My goodness, you would have thought that I had insulted the intelligence of the American people, according to some things that I read after those comments of mine, but now I notice it is becoming rather commonplace to

read that we are doing much better, and we are.

This does not mean that there are not difficult days ahead, but it does mean that we are better mobilized, better equipped with our allies, and the South Vietnamese are better organized and better equipped and better trained so that the Viet Cong no longer call the shots. They are on the defensive, and a continuous program of military offense to seek out, to search, and destroy the Viet Cong and their fortresses is under way, and this is the way that you defeat them.

We seek to defeat this aggression. We do not call for unconditional surrender, but we seek to stop the aggression, and we have engaged in a very measured, restrained and limited use of our power. I repeat, a measured, restrained and limited use of almost unlimited power, because we have unlimited power, but we do not seek to use it wildly. We seek no escalation. We seek to bring to bear that amount of power that is necessary for the single purpose of stopping the aggression, and we seek this in concert with others.

Our objectives have been clearly spelled out, to defeat aggression, to defeat social misery, to help build a stable society, and to secure a just and lasting peace.

Our objectives do not include conquest, domination, exploitation, or unlimited control and power in Asia, or any place else, and you can be proud of the men that represent you in the battlefield, my fellow Americans.

I have been with them. I have seen them. This is the best military force that has ever been put into the field, disciplined, trained, effective, combat ready, and uncomplaining -- uncomplaining. The rate of reenlistment is incredibly high, and to the fathers and the mothers that are here, let me tell you that the medical miracles that are being performed there are beyond human description, the rescue teams with the helicopters that go to pick up the wounded. Within 30 minutes any man that is wounded is in the hospital, and only 1 out of 100 hundred dies.

The rate of death from the wounded in World War I was almost 9 out of 100, 8.7; World War II over 4.5, about 5 out of 100; the Korean War about 3 out 100

and this one a little less than 1 out of 100, due to modern medicine, the miracles of modern medicine, care and your servicemen are not only doing a masterful job of bravery and courage on the battlefield, but they are true citizens of this country.

They are helping to rebuild the villages, teach the children, heal the sick, and they are doing it. They are proving that America is both brave and compassionate, both courageous and honorable. What a remarkable record.

General Westmoreland is a combination of the finest of our soldiery and the best of our citizenship, and our Allies are there, too.

The Koreans are there with one full division and another one coming. The Australians that I went to see had 1,500 men, and I am happy to say that a week after I left, they had 4,500 committed. I didn't have to ask. I talked only about our mutual responsibilities.

The New Zealanders are there, and the Philippines will be there. President Marcos has put his political life on the line before his Assembly and his Congress, but he will be there with the Philippines.

The fire power of our forces is unbelievable, the mobility unprecedented. My fellow Americans, there are more helicopters in South Viet Nam today than all the other countries of the world possess, and more to come, modern cavalry, the quickness and the swiftness of movement.

Oh, I hear people say, "Well, we're in the same debacle that the French were." Well, there is a great deal of difference. We are not a colonial power, with all due respects to our French friends and allies. We seek not to impose a rule. We do not have to spread our forces through Cambodia, Laos, and North Viet Nam, the whole of the peninsula. We are involved in South Viet Nam. The French had 130 airplanes. We have 2,500 there, ready for use for transport and battle, and may I say with some degree of pride that the American men that are there are the best trained, the healthiest, the most intelligent, the most competent military personnel that any nation has ever put into the field of battle, and we can be proud of them, and we ought not to take second place to anybody.

(Applause.)

And there is a new spirit because we have not only said that we wish to defeat aggression, we wish to defeat social misery and here is where we all come in. We are seeking to help build with the South Vietnamese a whole new society. We are seeking to bring modern education to them.

Our Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare just came back. He took with him a team of experts, the best that this nation has to offer, to help them in health and education and vocational training, manpower training.

Our Secretary of Agriculture took fourteen of the outstanding agriculturists of America, the best that we have to offer, and spent time there, and we are now sending teams of the very best of human resources that we have to help these people rebuild their country, and 39 other countries are doing the same thing in part, 39 of them.

We are not alone, even though sometimes when we read here at home you would think we were the only ones. There are people there from all over the world. The Iranians have doctors and hospitals, and medical teams. The Israelis are there, my friends, with agricultural specialists and doctors and teachers. The Philipinos are there. The Nationalist Chinese are there. The Canadians are there. The British are there. The Germans are there, and I have heard it said, "Well, why don't they send troops?" Because in some of these countries they have constitutional prohibitions. What is really needed for most of these countries now is their economic assistance, their technical assistance, and it is coming, because we have asked for it and they have volunteered it, and isn't this a wonderful challenge to win the other war?

Mark my words, as the distinguished, beloved, old Speaker, Sam Rayburn once said, when he was asked about General Marshall and somebody was criticizing General Marshall in World War II, a newspaperman said, "Well, what do you have to say about the General?" This Speaker said, "Well, I am

not going to say anything." He said, "I have a feeling that he knows more about fighting this war than I do, and if he doesn't, we have wasted a hell of a lot of money on West Point."

(Applause.)

Well, my friends, if these Generals of ours don't know how to do the job that they are assigned to do by the Commander in Chief, then we have wasted a lot of money, but I think they do.

The question is, do we know how to do our job? Do we, the civilians, know how to mobilize our resources, and you will be interested to know that I talked with the labor leaders, the free labor leaders of South Viet Nam. They have some, not many, and they are encouraged by the stand of the Labor Movement in America, and members of this organization have been there.

Oh, there are problems galore. If all you want to see are the troubles, you will cry your eyes out, but there are hopes, too, and there are possibilities, and what is more, those hopes and possibilities have to be realized. My fellow Americans, if it were easy, they woudn't need us.

Harry Truman said that the greatest asset of America is its character and its spirit. This country was put on this earth not to do what was possible -- other countries can do that -- we were put on this earth to do what some people think is impossible, and we can do it. We can get the leadership to get it done, and we are busily engaged in it with our friends and neighbors and allies, and today in Viet Nam there are training programs to re-educate and train thousands of young men to go on out and to work in these villages.

The Viet Cong is after them, too. Now, let me make it quite clear -- I want to just get this in quickly, before I forget it -- because every so often, I hear people around this country say, "Well, now, that Viet Cong is a national movement."

Is it? It was made, processed, organized, chartered and directed out of Hanoi. It has a nondescript not Communist lawyer from Saigon that never even fought the French. Who is at its head? And if you know his name, you win the \$64,000 prize. But everybody knows Ho Chi Min. The National Liberation front, the political

arm of the Viet Cong, the only honest word in that whole sentence is "front" and some of us around here have seen fronts before.

The National Liberation front is not national and it liberates no one, and the only honest word is that it's a front. It is a front for the Communist party out of Hanoi, North Viet Nam backed up by the Peking Communist Party out of China, my fellow Americans, and let's remember it.

And, so, then I hear people say, "Well, now, what we have got to do is recognize the National Liberation front."

Our President has said many times that in the negotiations there will be no problem for the Viet Cong to have its views presented by its representatives there. So, let's clear that up now. But we are not about ready to recognize the National Liberation front as the authentic voice of Nationalism in South Viet Nam because it's as phoney as a three dollar bill, and as treacherous as a jackal. And it is a Communist organized front, and its prime purpose when it was

established, as was said, was to arrive at a coalition government in South Viet Nam. And that is something else that we don't believe in. We just don't believe that you ought to hand over a part of the government to the Communists. That happened after World War II in Poland, in Hungary, in Romania; and it wasn't long before it was all Communist.

Now, how many lessons do you need to have? You don't ask two hundred and some thousand young Americans to put their bodies on the line of battle for so-called self determination and freedom in South Viet Nam and then have in the back of your mind, or say publicly, or think about it, that you are more or less going to -- just when it's all over, give them most of what they were fighting for, what the Viet Cong was fighting for anyway. Not me. If you want that, get a different Vice President, because I don't believe in that.

(Applause)

Now, if they can win some elections, if the free election process makes it possible for a Communist to be elected, so be it. He won in a free election, but he is not going to have me campaign for him.

(Laughter and applause.)

And I don't think he is going to have you, either. And what is more, I think we would be a whole lot better off around here if we just quit talking about how much we had to give away before we arrived at the peace table, or the conference table.

I have never known a good union leader that ever negotiated a good contract by telling the employer before he arrived that, "We don't mean it. We will give you half of what we are talking about anyway."

(Applause.)

One advantage that you have most of the time is that you can get somebody to come to the conference table, and you generally come there, both parties, look at each other directly in the eye with your respective requests and sometimes termed demands, and you bargain.

But I want to say right now that I can imagine what a local union would do if its business agent kind of passed the word to the boss ahead of time, saying, "Well, we really didn't mean all of that. That is just a little talk. If you will just come around next week, we will give you -- we will cut our demands in half or a third, and you can really have it."

If that word ever got out --

(Laughter.)

-- the ranks of the unemployed would expand.

(Laughter.)

But you do know that when you come to the conference table, you do have to bargain. And we are prepared for honest negotiations, but I know that no union is prepared to negotiate its union out of business. And you wouldn't be worth your salt -- in fact, you would be a traitor to the cause of unionism if the price of your getting an agreement with the management was to betray the principles of unionism.

And we would be a traitor to the cause of freedom if the price of peace is to sell out the cause of peace in the name of peace. So, you got my point of view, I think.

(Applause.)

I never had any trouble expressing it.

(Applause.)

Well, I have taken too much of your time. I merely wanted to leave you with some observations, reflections.

I ask you to be of good cheer. I have heard many people say, "Well, how can we bear these burdens?"

Some people are saying that it's such a burden on our economy, this struggle, that we can't bear it. That is not true.

3-2

Let me give you a figure. In the Korean War we spent approximately 14 percent of our total Gross National Product on defense, and we had 800,000 men in Korea.

In this struggle we are spending 7.6 percent of our Gross National Product -- a little more than half of what we spent in the Korean War, and we have 235,000 men in Viet Nam. Maybe more will be needed.

I only say this, that a \$700 billion economy and a nation of almost 200 million people that has had five years of sustained economic growth is a strong nation, capable of sustaining the defense freedom at home and abroad, and of the development of the great society. We can have both guns and butter. We can have both ammunition and education. We can have both social action in Viet Nam and Medicare in the United States. We can have it if we stay on the job and do our job and exercise a little self discipline and some self confidence.

This country of ours has immense powers and immense strength and immense potentiality, and these programs of education that we are spending

our money upon now increases our strength.

Americans need to be better trained, and better educated.

These great human resources that we have here can be enriched. We made a bigger bomb by enriched uranium, and we are going to make a better country by enriched people, people that are healthier people, that are better trained, better educated, people that are better housed. We are going to build better cities for our people. We are going to take care of the precious resources of America for our people, because the resources of this country, the farms and the cities and the homes and the people, the men and the women and the children, that is the basic strength of freedom, and it's on that base -- it's from this base that we draw the strength that we need from time to time around this world.

And then I had heard people say, "But how can you be committed in South Viet Nam and still fulfill your commitments elsewhere?"

I will tell you why and how: Because we have the military establishments today of three million men, and 235,000 of them, or about that, are in Viet Nam.

The other 2,765,000 are spread around the world and here in the United States.

We are a big country. We don't need to be belligerent or bellicose or arrogant. In fact, we should be humble and respectful and grateful, but we need to be firm and we need to be resolute and never under estimate our capacities, to do what needs to be done.

And never let the enemy under estimate it, either, because I have a feeling that both Kaiser Bill and Hitler under estimated it. And I have a feeling that some other people in the world now properly estimate it.

In the Kremlin, for example, and we appreciate their strength, too; but I also have a feeling that somehow that the Chinese still believe we are a paper tiger -- the Chinese Communists -- and I am convinced that our firm resistance to aggression in Viet Nam is giving them some second thoughts, and I am also convinced that the two billion people in Asia are standing up and saying, "You know what? These Americans will fight for us, too."

What greater gift can you give than the honor of your country and the life of your loved ones, and, my fellow Americans, we can never have it understood in this world, or believe it -- and let me repeat, we can never have, never have anyone believe in this world that the only people that we will fight for are the whites of Europe. If aggression is an evil force, then aggression any place is an evil force. If Communist militaristic aggression is evil in Europe, then it's equally evil in Asia, and let us make it crystal clear that the Americans of every race, creed, and color who die today in Viet Nam are the kind of Americans that will defend the freedom of the brown and the yellow people just as much as they will of the white people.

(Applause.)

Those are my views, and I just came here to take your time, to share them with you because I know that you are not just Trade Unionists. That is a high enough honor and you can be very proud of your movement, but I know that the Labor movement in America is intensely patriotic. I know that the Labor movement in America represents millions and millions of families. I know that your sons and daughters are deeply concerned about what is going on, and so are you. And I believe that the leaders of our country must come to you and talk to you directly, as we see it, about what is going on.

You are more concerned about the lives of your sons and daughters than you are of 14(b). And you are more concerned about the strength and the security of your nation than you are of the minimum wage.

It isn't that the two are in contradiction we ought to be concerned about at all, but if I could show you this morning that by some piece of legislation being passed or not passed, we could get peace in Viet Nam, you wouldn't care whether we failed the whole program. You would prefer that we had both, and I think we can get both, but I know you. I know you as

fellow citizens and as friends, and neighbors, and I know you not only as leaders in the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, I know some of you as intimate friends. But I know all of you as fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, and I know that what you want above all is a better life for your children, and I know that what you want along with that is that they shall live and, therefore, I know that you hunger for the day of peace.

But I know that the Labor movement never won its struggle by cowardice or appeasement. I know that there are men in this movement who have been jailed in the cause of free trade unionism. I know there are men in the Labor movement that have been beaten as they sought to organize a plant and had they not been willing to stand up and to fight, there wouldn't be any free Labor movement.

And, my fellow Americans, unless we are willing to stand up and be counted, there will be no free world; so we have a common purpose.

Thank you very much.

(Standing ovation.)

This was so successful you
might want to refresh your
memory and use it for the
Plumbers and Pipe Fitters.

[Aug. 8, 1966]

THIS IS MY FILE COPY OF

TRANSCRIPT OF YOUR REMARKS 3/24/66

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES CONFERENCE



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